New York Yankees cut some premium ticket prices because of empty seats at new stadium

BY RONALD BLUM, GAEA NEWS NETWORK   
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**Empty seats make Yankees cut some premium prices**

NEW YORK — Turns out a few more fans might be able to buy those empty front-row seats at Yankee Stadium. The New York Yankees slashed prices on more than 40 percent of their front-row seats by up to 50 percent Tuesday and announced many of those who bought tickets closest to the field for $325-$2,500 will be eligible for additional free seats.

Those initiatives could help pack previously unfilled areas that were an eye sore on television broadcasts during the opening homestand at the $1.5 billion ballpark.

“There are a few hundred suite seats in our premium locations that have not been sold on a full season basis,” Yankees managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner said in a statement. “As a result, and for many of our fans who have already purchased full season suite seats in such premium locations, the Yankees are announcing today a program that adjusts certain prices and benefits.”

While most of the cheaper tickets in the second and third decks were sold for the opening six games, entire sections of cushioned blue seats with teak arm rests in the first nine rows in 25 sections went empty, areas that cost $500 and up. In addition, many of the non-premium seats between the bases, which cost $325 as part of season tickets and $375 individually, also went unfilled.

MSNBC’s Keith Olbermann, who owns three $850 Legends Suite season tickets, was unhappy prices were cut only for those with front-row seats while others will be given additional tickets.

“If they’re offering only selective refunds, depend upon it: There are going to be lawsuits,” he said. “Great, more tickets nobody wants. The silver lining here is that even more charities are going to be getting even more tickets from me.”

The price of first-row season seats in nine sections of the Delta Sky360 Suite one deck up behind home plate was cut from $750 to $550.

Among the top non-premium seats in the lower deck, the Yankees announced a buy-three-get-one-free program for new $325-a-seat season tickets in the 15 sections between the bases.

Steinbrenner said the Yankees had sold 85 percent of their premium seats and 37,000 full-season equivalents, more than 3.4 million tickets in all. But it was apparent most of the unsold seats were closest to the field.

In response, the team cut the price of first-row Legends Suite seats in four sections on the outer half of the dugouts and photo cages from $2,500 to $1,250. According to a count by The Associated Press, 48 seats were affected.

In addition, seats in the first row in the final three sections down each foul line were slashed from $1,000 to $650. That affects 68 seats.

In all, the AP count had the Yankees cutting the price of 116 of 258 front-rows seats, which have been on sale for up to $2,625 for individual games. The team said the reductions will apply to this season only, and ticket buyers can receive either a refund or credit.

Assemblyman Richard Brodsky of Westchester, a frequent and vocal critic of the Yankees, said the reductions weren’t enough.

“It’s the public that built Yankee Stadium, and even at these prices, the public has been excluded from the very stadium they built,” Brodsky said. “It’s a continuing disaster.”

Those who bought $2,500 first-row season tickets in the 11 sections surrounding the plate that weren’t reduced — there are 98 seats in that area — will receive an equal number of free first-row tickets for the rest of the season. Those who bought $1,250 first-row seats in the first two sections past each photo cage — 44 seats previously in that category — will receive free seats for 24 games.

Fans who bought $850 Legends Suite season tickets — there are 843 seats located in that category — will get free seats in the same section for eight games and free seats in the $500 section for four games.

Those who bought $600 Legends Suite season tickets — 324 seats are in that area — will get free seats in the $500 section for 10 games. Those who bought $500 Legends Suite seats — there are 470 — will get free seats in that section for eight games.

Among the $325 non-premium seats between the bases, the Yankees said fans who bought two or three season tickets will receive two free tickets for every other game starting with Thursday or Friday. Those who bought four or five season tickets will get two free seats for every game, those who bought six or seven will get three free seats for every game and those who bought season tickets will get four free seats for every game.

The Yankees have charged far higher prices than the Mets, whose top 92 seats behind home plate, called Delta Club Platinum, average $495 under the team’s five-tier variable pricing system at $800 million Citi Field.